



a

**STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Rehabilitation Services
Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Services for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing**

CITIZENS PLAZA BUILDING
400 DEADERICK STREET, 14th FLOOR
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243
TELEPHONE: 615-741-7681
FAX: 615-313-4726 / TTY: 1-800-270-1349
Gary.Weaver@tn.gov

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

RAQUEL HATTER, MSW, Ed.D.
COMMISSIONER

To: All Managers of Tennessee Business Enterprises
From: Gary Weaver, Director
Subject: New Year
Date: January 05, 2015

Hi Everyone and Happy New Year,

Another year has come and gone. Is it just me or does time just seem to go by quicker and quicker? 2014 was a year of a lot of changes to Tennessee Business Enterprises. After spending more than 20 years employed by TBE, Everett Woods accepted another job and left to pursue other goals. Doug Rhodes became the new Middle Tennessee supervisor. Benita Davis was hired as a Middle Tennessee Consultant. Robyn White was hired as my Administrative Assistant. Yvette Neblett moved to the downtown Citizens Plaza office and Rhonda McNally was hired to replace her at the Middle Tennessee office.

Areas of focus for 2014 included getting Tennessee Business Enterprises warehouses throughout the State, clean, neat and organized. Making sure managers were better prepared, organized and audit ready. This included a renewed focus on semi-annual reviews and health inspections. Every good business should have good accounting controls in place. More of an emphasis was placed on gross and net profit numbers. Utilizing managers and consultant/specialists working together to look at merchandise purchases, payroll, expenses, customer service and overall business practices to grow the profit and sales numbers, which means more money for managers and more money for the Agency. This was accomplished by revisiting the Facility Visit form and making sure the site visits were focusing on whether we were making money or losing money. If we were losing money, why were we losing money and what could we do to make the business more profitable? As an Agency, we also tried to provide more Upward Mobility training geared around things

that could positively affect your business and grow you as a manager. The goal for the Agency consultant/specialists was to have at least 75% of our managers make both gross and net profit for the year. Through November, 2014, (December and the full year aren't available yet), 83% of managers throughout the State are making both performance standards. Wow! This is an incredible number and one which we should be very proud. Of course, as a manager, if you make the net profit standard for the year, you would also qualify for the additional year-end profit bonus. As Director, I want an emphasis on annual plans for 2015. I am challenging my supervisors to have all annual plans completed by the end of February. It is essential that as annual plans are completed by the consultant/specialists and the managers jointly, we have as much time as possible to focus on those actions that will make a positive difference in changing the sales and profit numbers for the upcoming year.

Another focus during 2014 was healthy vending and the NANA percentages. The goal for State buildings is 30%. The Agency and the representatives from the Committee of Blind Managers met with Finance and Administration and Health Department folks to talk about what's working and not working with healthy vending and challenged both agencies to help get employees down to our machines to buy our products. The NANA goal will not be increasing in 2015 and I feel this is a reflection of the progress that we made in the meetings and the understanding of the obstacles that we are facing as business people. It appears we will end the 2014 year around 25% NANA or healthy items being sold in our machines. We will continue these meetings into 2015. The feeling is that the customer should have a healthy option but as business men and women, a fair percentage of healthy products in our machines, based on sales.

In 2014, we continued to add commissaries throughout the State as another source of income for managers and TBE. We are very fortunate to have Kevin Burke drive this process. In the Memphis area, we were finally able to add a few machines at the University of Memphis and this continues to be work in progress. A Subway is also opening in the Memphis area as we speak. MATA and the Med Center continue to be a work in progress for our legal team in the West Tennessee area. The Tennessee Business Enterprise web-site is finally up and running. We will be adding different elements to this site as we go through the year. A couple of Avanti markets were opened during 2014, one in Nashville and one in Jackson, as we continue to look for more opportunities to grow TBE and look at different avenues to make money for our program.

So, where do I see TBE going in 2015? Number one would be to continue the "business" focus. That means challenging my supervisors and consultant/specialists to provide managers better business training on customer service, hiring, merchandising, employee relations, laws, accounting procedures, sales and profit. I want more of an emphasis on equipment

inventory, knowing exactly where every piece of equipment is located and making sure changes are made during equipment moves. There will be even more of a focus on profit numbers. I feel that the standards are fair, so if a manager is not making the goals, let's find out why and fix it, so that manager can make even more money in the coming year. I want managers and consultant/specialists to work the action plans that have been agreed on for the coming year and expect progress. I want us to look at comp growth (or sales over last year) to grow our business. Are we growing our business, remaining the same or losing ground and if so why? I want my supervisors to spend more time coaching and teaching consultant/specialists how to be better at their jobs. I would like to visit more areas throughout the State to see what managers are doing to grow TBE and their business. I will be challenging Barry Bryant to grow the unassigned accounts and make those businesses as profitable as possible. I want the Agency to continue the focus on accounting procedures with managers to ensure TBE runs its business per State and Federal guidelines. Each manager should know every dollar that they are making and where every dollar goes that they are spending. This should be a daily, weekly and monthly accounting process. I want us to continue to look for ways to improve and continue to be viewed as one of the best Business Enterprise programs anywhere. I wish everyone the best of 2015. May you be successful and prosperous in every aspect of your business and personal life!

Gary